

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

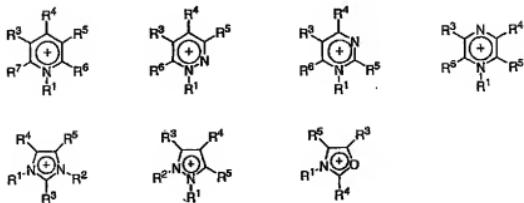
1. (Original) A method for preparing an organic starch ester comprising mixing a starch material with an ionic liquid solvent to dissolve the starch, and then treating the dissolved starch with an organic esterifying agent to form an organic starch ester, and subsequently separating the organic starch ester from the solution.

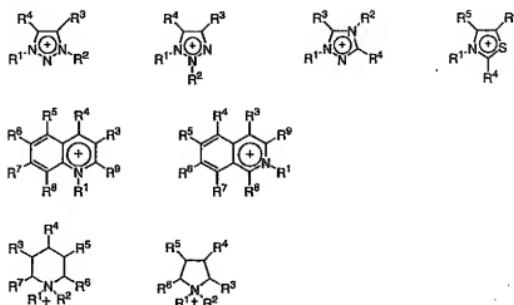
2. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the microwave irradiation is applied to assist in dissolution and esterification.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 1 or 2 wherein pressure is applied to assist in dissolution and esterification.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the ionic liquid solvent is molten at a temperature of below 200 °C.

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the cation of the liquid solvent is selected from the group consisting of

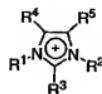




wherein R¹ and R² are independently a C₁-C₆ alkyl or C₂-C₆ alkoxyalkyl group, and R³, R⁴, R⁵, R⁶, R⁷, R⁸ and R⁹ are independently hydrogen, a C₁-C₆ alkyl, C₂-C₆ alkoxyalkyl or C₁-C₆ alkoxy group, and

wherein the anion of the ionic liquid solvent is halogen, thiocyanate, cyanate, pseudohalogen or C₁-C₆ carboxylate.

6. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 5 wherein said cation comprises



wherein R³-R⁵ are each hydrogen and R¹ and R² are the same or different and represent C₁-C₆ alkyl, and said anion is halogen, preferably chloride.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the starch material is native starch or hydrolyzed starch.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the organic starch ester is separated from the solution by adding a non-solvent for the organic starch ester to precipitate the organic starch ester.

9. (Original) The method according to claim 8 wherein the non-solvent is an alcohol, a ketone, acetonitrile, a polyglycol, an ether or water.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the organic starch ester is separated by extraction with a non-solvent for the ionic liquid solvent.

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the organic esterifying agent is a C₁-C₁₁, ~~preferably a C₄-C₆~~ carboxylic acid or a reactive derivative thereof.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 11 wherein the C₁-C₆ carboxylic acid or a reactive derivative thereof is formic acid, acetic acid, propanoic acid, butanoic acid, acetic anhydride, propanoic anhydride or butanoic anhydride.

13. (New) The method according to claim 5 wherein said anion is chloride.

14. (New) The method according to claim 1 wherein said organic esterifying agent is a C₁-C₆ carboxylic acid or a reactive derivative thereof.